



# Climate Land Leaders 2023-2024 Strategic Plan

Completed 01.31.2023

**VISION** Land stewards build soil health, increase biodiversity and protect water so that ecosystems and communities can thrive in a rapidly changing climate.

**MISSION** Landowners create community and support to alleviate climate change through land stewardship and conservation.

### GOAL 1

The Climate Land Leaders Initiative grows and strengthens its community and support

#### Two-year measurements of success

- 210 individuals, who control 75,000 acres in the Midwest, participate by 12.31.2024
- Cohort grows more ethnically diverse each year
- All Climate Land Leaders report the Initiative has helped them achieve their on-farm conservation goals
- All Climate Land Leaders report the Initiative has given them a stronger community
- All Climate Land Leaders report an increased commitment to address the climate crisis through this Initiative

### GOAL 2

Climate Land Leaders boldly act on the climate emergency

#### Two-year measurements of success

- Climate Land Leaders collectively transform 7,500 cropped acres to permanent cover by 12.2024.
- 12 CLLs serve as leaders in federal and state policy (Exs: Advising and developing policy platforms, contacting legislators)
- CLLs help secure six policy changes that advance the ability of landowners to implement permanent cover
- 75+ CLLs will be featured in the media and social media urging bold action on climate and agriculture

### GOAL 3

The Climate Land Leaders Initiative is an effective, efficient and inspiring organization

#### Action steps

- Prioritize equity
- Expand Board of Directors
- Ensure solid financials
- Publicly share governance materials
- Reward staff
- Build partnerships

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES | We, the Climate Land Leaders...



Dismantle inequalities that limit access to land tenure



Respect and learn from the natural world through observation and engagement



Use indigenous knowledge and scientific evidence as guides



Support and hold each other accountable



Welcome people at various places in their journey to land transformation



Work with nonprofit, government and business partners for greater impact



Grow food and fiber with regenerative practices that heal ecosystems and revitalize rural communities



Implement the urgent climate action needed through land stewardship practices, working in community and through policy drivers



### 1. The Climate Land Leaders Initiative grows and strengthens its community and support

#### Building community

- Hold full cohort zoom meetings twice yearly
- Hold three meetings yearly (in addition to full cohort call) on specific topics, including but not limited to: 1) Row crop production, 2) Natural area conservation and 3) Succession/legacy. Programming for each topic area led by individual Climate Land Leader(s) and staff (Also see Goal 2 for other subgroups.)
- Equity subgroup meets six times per year, featuring Black, Indigenous and People of Color and their farming/conservation/land journeys
- Equity subgroup works with cadre of Black, Indigenous and People of Color to develop recommendations for more robustly integrating equity into CLL's work; Board votes on implementation
- Hold three in-person meet-ups per year in different geographic locations, all CLLs invited to each meeting
- Provide opportunities for CLL get-togethers at conferences
- Provide contact info and short bios on CLLs on Members portion of website

#### Focus on goal setting

- CLLs set goals at the beginning of the year, share with the cohort, check-in provided at end of year
- CLLs report yearly on progress toward goals and share results with others

#### Recruitment and onboarding

- CLLs recruit others to join using established criteria
- Encourage diversity among the cohort by recruiting or partnering with Native American tribes, faith communities, nonprofit organizations and cooperative farms
- New CLLs fill out intake form, are welcomed on the discussion list and publicly (with their permission), and contacted by a Board member. In addition, they are offered a one-on-one soil consultation.
- Offer CLLs newer to conservation implementation one-on-one consultations on getting started

#### Arts

- Integrate art for inspiration and managing climate grief at each meeting
- Lift up CLLs' individual creative endeavors on social media and website
- Continue book, podcast and movie discussions

### 2. Climate Land Leaders boldly act on the climate emergency

#### Two subgroups

- Activate subgroup focused on transforming cropland to perennial enterprises, with 12 Climate Land Leaders participating in Year One and an additional four (16 total) in Year Two. Those participants share financial and other barriers, challenges with markets, successes, policy changes needed, etc.
- Activate a CLL subgroup of six participants, including scientific advisor, that will track research and communication on carbon sequestration in soils, GHG reduction and ecosystem services measurements; communicate the subgroup's findings to full cohort, to policy makers, in the media and social media

#### On-farm research

- Play leadership role in clarifying the impact of agriculture systems on climate through on-farm research projects such as 1000 Farms
- Offer free soil testing, encourage CLLs to take baseline before making significant changes

#### Communications

- Develop annual social media goals and plans to tell the stories of CLLs boldly acting on the climate emergency, inspire prospective members and engage followers
- Staff and CLLs take training on messages most likely to convey the urgency of our climate change situation and the need for immediate action
- Six Climate Land Leaders serve as narrative leaders per year through Rural Regeneration through Climate Action by 12.2023
- CLLs take knowledge learned through the cohort to their other networks

#### Policy

- Climate Land Leaders play federal and state policy roles focused on robust funding for those who provide ecosystem services, including: developing a Farm Bill platform, publicizing its components in the media and social media, serving on Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Soil and Water Conservation District and other committees on the state and local level

### 3. The Climate Land Leaders Initiative is an effective, efficient and inspiring organization

#### Prioritize equity

- Develop Diversity Equity and Inclusion policy by 12.2023
- Ensure that the Board includes participation by Black, Indigenous and People of Color by 12.2023.
- Pay robust stipends to speakers and participants who are Black, Indigenous and People of Color
- Prioritize hiring Black, Indigenous and People of Color staff and consultants for additional positions

#### Expand Board of Directors

- Convene quarterly board meetings
- Review and approve Employee Handbook and policies and procedures yearly
- Evaluate Executive Director yearly
- Expand Board to up to eight members, including non-CLL representation

#### Ensure solid financials

- Secure public charity status by mid-year 2023
- Work with independent financial consultants to ensure integrity
- Increase diversity of grant sources, with no more than 30% from any one source
- Raise \$25,000+ from 40 donors in unrestricted donations in 2023 and \$30,000+ from 50 donors in 2024
- Add CLL to Charity Navigator and other platforms that verify organizational integrity

#### Publicly share governance materials

- Issue annual report yearly
- Add disclosure page to website that includes tax returns, strategic plan, annual report

#### Reward staff

- Implement more robust benefits package that includes a retirement savings match with a cap
- Ensure that staff are compensated at 75% of industry averages

#### Build partnerships

- CLL partners with at least 10 organizations to ensure cross-pollination and to avoid duplication, including joint funding proposals and coalition